

## FLU VACCINE SHORTAGE: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

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Senator Lieberman and his staff are conscientiously monitoring the evolution of the flu vaccine shortage in Connecticut (CT). We have received dozens of inquiries asking what is being done by the government. Below are some commonly asked questions and the answers we are providing to address your concerns.

### **Q: What are new developments in the flu vaccine shortage?**

**A:** The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has changed its eligibility guidelines to the following: *Note that persons 50-64 and healthy adults caring for patients are now eligible!*

Health care practitioners are asked to voluntarily limit the administration of influenza vaccine to the following at risk groups:

- All children aged 6-23 months
- All adults aged 50 years and older
- Persons aged 2-50 years with chronic medical conditions
- All women who will be pregnant during the flu season
- Residents of nursing homes and long-term care facilities
- Children 6-18 months on chronic aspirin therapy
- Health care workers involved in direct patient care
- Out of home caregivers and household contacts of children under 6 months

### **Q: What has the Senator done about the shortage of flu vaccine?**

**A:** *We have actively supported critical information flows to doctors in CT and the CT Department of Health. The CT Department of Health, in turn, works with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to help insure flu vaccine gets to the most vulnerable patients. Senator Lieberman also wrote the Secretary of Health and Human Services, inquiring about the obstacles to the importation of flu vaccine from other countries in order to meet our needs this season with a safe product.*

### **Q: Where can I find useful information about the flu vaccine shortage and other related information?**

**A:** Useful information on the flu vaccine shortage as well as information on how to prevent and treat the flu, and how to distinguish between the flu and the common cold is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/>. The Department of Health

and Human Services (HHS) also maintains a useful website (<http://www.hhs.gov/flu>) containing up-to-date news on the flu vaccine shortage.

**Q: Where can I find information about how to obtain a flu shot in CT?**

**A:** Your regular provider or local health department can provide helpful advice. The newer guidelines that allow more people to become vaccinated do not guarantee that your local site will have doses available, so you may still need to search. The CT chapter of the American Lung Association also has a helpful web site at <http://www.alact.org/>.

**Q: What is being done to prevent vaccine from being given to the “wrong” people?**

**A:** Governor Rell of Connecticut has declared a “supply emergency” for the influenza vaccine in order to give the state authority to manage redistribution of the scant supply of vaccine and to combat price gouging.

**Q: Shouldn’t I be getting my flu vaccine right now?**

**A:** Flu season usually peaks in CT in January. There is still time to get a flu shot that will protect against exposures in late January.

**Q: I usually get a flu vaccine, but I am ineligible this year. What should I do?**

**A:** Follow common sense hygiene measures to prevent acquisition or spread of disease. These include frequent hand washing, avoiding contact with those who are sick, staying home when ill, and covering one’s mouth during sneezing or coughing. More details are available from the CDC website: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

**Q: Why is it that Canadians have flu vaccine and we have a shortage?**

**A:** Canada has its own vaccine manufacturers, as do many other countries. HHS is examining the safety and efficacy data of foreign manufacturers to see if its vaccine could be brought into this country to help manage our shortage now and in seasons to come. HHS recently approved approximately 4 million vaccine doses for importation by from GlaxoSmithKlein in Germany.